1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

Chapter XV

Birth and Childhood

A. Hill Marias

No Marias are unaware of the causal connexion between intercourse and pregnancy, and all women know when they miss their first menstruation that they are probably starting to bear a child. Pregnancy among Hill Marias is attended by no taboo either for man or wife, so far as I could ascertain, and the wife continues performing her ordinary routine work right up to the last day of her pregnancy. Sexual intercourse, however, ceases as soon as pregnancy is known to have begun. 842 843

During ordinary menstruation, as we have seen in Chapter VI, the wife, like all young women, is secluded for five or six days either in the communal menstruation hut, or in the *kala* or menstruation room or the separate menstruation hut of the house. The menstruation huts, whether communal or private, are known as *pedawo'gha'i*, or (in the south of the Abujhmar hills) as *dola-lon*, or (in the extreme north) as *kurma-lon*. The term *pedawo'gha'i* is applied also sometimes to the *kala* room in the houses. These huts and rooms have been described already on pages 104-6. The Hill Marias say that their clan-god and their Departed would be angry if they gave up their immemorial custom of secluding their women during menstruation, and that no man should see a woman's face at such a time; we have seen that they often guard against the magic of women in this condition by placing castor oil plants and seeds on the roof of the hut when it is occupied. The men do not seem to have any clear idea of what happens to a woman at such times; they only know and say that she 'has gone *pedawo'gha'i*'. There is no ceremony of any kind at a girl's first menstruation, or during pregnancy. Though children are generally born in the menstruation room or hut, and for some time after birth the mother has to live there subject to the same prohibitions as during menstruation, yet during her nine months she is free from the ordinary taboos to which she is subject during menstruation; that is to say, she is free to visit her husband in the fields and to cook his food for him, in fact to do all her ordinary household and field or market tasks. But it is taboo for a pregnant woman to pick or break anything growing. There may possibly be certain prohibitions which I did not discover, 841 [789] [881] [844] 843

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria

843 such as, in other parts of India, of the use of a knife or the cutting of anything; but ordinary enquiry elicited no clue to them.

844 It was said on page 106 that children are born in the menstruation hut or room. This is certainly the case so far as the private huts and rooms are concerned; but in my notes it is not clear whether births ever take place in the communal menstruation hut. They probably do not, because obviously it may be needed at any time for other women of the village, and I have notes of children in Hikpulla and Nugur, where there are communal menstruation huts, being born in a corner of the veranda of the house specially walled off for the purpose.

[777] Cases are known of a mother being delivered of a child in the fields or the forest, but this is considered very unlucky, and as soon as the mother knows that her hour is upon her, she must make every effort to get in time to the menstruation hut or room. During delivery she may have the comfort of the presence of her mother-in-law or some woman from the village; but there are no midwives, and the woman with her must not touch her or assist the delivery; the mother is expected to do everything for herself, and it is regarded as very wrong if she is unable to do so. They pray to the clan-god during a difficult delivery, but appear to do nothing else to assist the mother by either medicine or ceremony. The mother herself has to cut the navel-cord of her baby either with her husband's ordinary knife or with an arrow-head. She cuts it about three or four inches from its junction with the stomach, and binds it close to the junction with a ligature of cord, the portion between the cut and the ligature being left to dry and fall off; and she is expected to bury the placenta (*modi*) immediately after this under the house rubbish-heap outside the back of the house. If the child is born dead, the mother has to bury it somewhere in the forest, going there alone and digging the grave without assistance; it may not be buried in the regular village graveyard. Around Handawada a mother is expected to stay in the menstruation room for a full month after delivery; but the general rule in the interior of the Abujhmar hills is for her to remain there for eight days or until the navel-cord dries and falls off.

[845 766]

846 Everywhere it is taboo for the father to do any field or other work during this period of eight days before the navel-cord falls. No medicine is given to him. He must not sleep in the house during the period in most parts of the hills, but in the dormitory; around Handawada he sleeps in the portion of the *kala* room separated from the woman's portion by the *binda* mud threshold. He must not cook his own food during this period, and has to get a man friend to cook food for him in another house and bring it to

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AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

village dormitories were present. All were Padali by clan from Padali villages. Their dormitory mates were respectively Lahari, a Nuroti girl, Jaliaru, an Usendi girl, and Nirosa, a Nuroti girl; and despite their different designations, these girls were the head-girls of their villages in virtue of their boys' ranks. Another Usendi village in Padalibhum called its head boy Silledar, and his mate was Jhelo, a Padali girl. All four stated freely that they expected ultimately to marry their mates, and that they and all the other dormitory boys often had sexual intercourse with their girls.

The dormitory in these *parganas*, as among the neighbouring Murias, is really a school for training the youth of both sexes in conjugal and social duties and in the lore of the clan; the dormitory office-bearers are practically prefects and monitors. The headman and other elders of the villages frequently call on the head-boy for the help of his boys and girls in field-work; but here they are not paid wages, as among the Murias, but are only fed by those for whom they are working. They are also asked to help in thatching houses and building granaries. In weddings the girls are expected to sing, and boys to collect fuel and leaves for cups, and both have to dance; they have similar functions at the various new-eating festivals. The head-boy imposes fines for unjustifiable absence from the dormitory, or from weddings and festivals, or general disobedience of his orders or those of other office-bearers, a bottle of *mahua* spirit being the usual penalty, the cost of which falls upon the parents. The head-boy's mate has similar powers of fining other girls. At the nightly meetings of boys and girls at the dormitory there are dancing in season, tale-telling, singing and games, and from an early age boys are given practical lessons in sexual intercourse.

B. Bison-horn Marias

The information which I was able to collect on this subject among the Bison-horn Marias is much less full than that given above for the Hill Marias, and needs further testing and considerable supplementing.

During pregnancy the mother carries on her ordinary work. The only note which I have of any disability attaching to pregnancy is that when the flesh of animals slain in the *mela* ceremonial hunts is divided up and eaten, no share may be given to the husband of a wife who either is pregnant or has her monthly period. In most Bison-horn villages there is no menstruation hut, and in their houses there is no menstruation room. A few villages near the foot of the Abujhmar hills have a hut where young girls are

[See cat. 116, pp. 425-426. - Ravi Vyas]

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

843 secluded for their first menstruation, known as the *piki-kurma-lon*; but generally speaking, Bison-horn Marias do not seem to hold in the same strength the Hill Maria fear of a woman in this condition.

844 For the birth of a child a separate hut or booth is erected in the compound, generally at the back of the house, known as the *er-nihitana-lon*, or water-washing hut. This is often little more than the roughest of booths, and considerably inferior to even a Bison-horn Maria pigsty. Here the mother remains for a full month, during which her husband is not allowed to go to his work. The delivery is assisted by an experienced woman relative or fellow-villager, who cuts and binds the navel-cord and washes the child immediately after it is born, and gives it to the mother to suckle. No food is given to the mother that day; on the next morning she is made to drink a decoction of the bark of the *kusum* [824] tree (*Schleichera trijuga*), the root of the dwarf *chkind* palm (*Phoenix sylvestris*), and *kulthi* (*Dolichos biflorus*) pulses, pounded to a powder and boiled together, and an hour or two after this dose she is given a meal of warm boiled rice. She is dosed and fed in this way for six or seven days more, until the navel-cord falls off; and then she washes her whole body and is allowed to eat regular meals. At the 852 end of the month the *lon-wa'ina* or Returning to the House ceremony takes place. The child is named with the aid of a medium, though 533 actually names seem to be given for reasons very similar to those actuating Hill Maria choice of names. A pig, a goat or a number of cocks are killed, and the mother, having washed her clothes and her body, cooks the flesh, all the villagers and relatives being entertained to dinner. Thenceforward the mother is free to resume all her normal household and field work, and the father can resume his work.

553 I once witnessed an unusual naming ceremony. A son had been born after three elder brothers had died. It was considered 789 that their deaths had been due to the hostility of some demon or of the familiar spirit of some magician, and on the medium's advice the baby had been suspended in a rough cradle over the rubbish-heap by the fence of the *bari* garden, and all the men present threw cow-dung and filth all round the cradle, shouting out '*Kacharu*' or 'Filth!', which name was given to the child in the hope that thereby the malignant power would be deceived into thinking that the parents set no value on the child.

862 Children are breast-fed for two years or more, as among the Hill Marias. It has been already recorded (page 219) that there is among the Bison-horn Marias a special weaning ceremony during the Jata Pandum at which the first solid food given to the children is a portion of the rice and meat offered to the Departed.

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

841 or fowls. She must not take grain from the bins or approach the Hearth of the Departed. Except at the menarche, however, she may fetch wood and leaves which may be used by other members of the household; she may fish so long as it is not in a pond; she may even dance so long as it is not at a Penkarsita and she does not touch any man.

When I was taking photographs in Maria villages I frequently came up against these taboos. At Mokhpal I was unable to photograph a girl with strikingly Mongolian features because she was in her period—the people seemed genuinely afraid that the menstrual exhalations would break the lens. At Tikanpal, where I wanted to stage a group of girls making leaf-cups, I was not permitted to do so because one of them was in her period and must not sit on a mat. At Doriras a married girl refused to be photographed standing in front of the girls' dormitory because menstruating women were accustomed to sleep there.

During a wife's period a husband is subject to the laws of a 'little couvade'. No one will eat from his hands; no one will accept tobacco from his pouch. He must not cook or fetch water. He too must not go to the grain bins or approach the symbols of the Departed. He may go to a shrine, but he must not enter it; he may cut his clearing, but he must not fire it or sow seed. He may not hunt, carry a *kawar*-pole, climb a tree, cut grass or reap a crop. If he is a Perma or Gaita he may not perform any religious rite, and if he is a Gunia he cannot divine the cause of sickness.

842 It is generally believed by the Marias, as by the rest of India, that a woman is most likely to conceive if she has intercourse on the day she has her ceremonial bath at the close of the period.

886 As by other aboriginals the climacteric is accepted by the Marias as a matter of course. 'As it appears, so it disappears.' If an elderly woman or her husband dreams of a dried-up tank or stream, it means that this crisis is approaching.

V

843 Pregnancy is diagnosed by the cessation of the menses, vomiting, swelling of the breasts and a darkening of the nipples. 'The face dries a little.' It is generally supposed that a boy is more exacting and makes the mother look fragile and exhausted, while a girl keeps her fresh and well.

843 177 During pregnancy, Bison-horn Maria taboos are not exacting and my suspicion is that originally they were as few and as casual as those of the Hill Maria, and that any elaboration is due to the influence of the local Hindus who, on the whole, pay more attention to the pregnancy than to the menstrual taboos. In other words,

1: Grigson G-5 (1927-1934) 1949
AW32 Gond AW32
Hill Maria
Bison Horn Maria

Hinduization weakens the taboo on the menstruating and strengthens that on the pregnant woman. It was at Gudra, which stands on a motor-road, that I heard most about restrictions during pregnancy. The pregnant woman in that village was not allowed to cross a stream or the rope with which a horse was tethered; she could not pick or reap any growing thing; if she plastered a wall, she must leave a small hole somewhere. She must not eat the head or legs of a sacrificed animal.[1] Eclipses are dangerous; if a woman goes out of doors at such a time there is danger that her child may be born with a hare-lip or a squint. It is sometimes held that a pregnant woman should not go to the forest clearings; at Barem the daughter of Barse Chule did so; she met a Rau in a whirlwind and was prematurely delivered of a stillborn child.

The cravings of pregnancy are believed, as elsewhere in India, to be due to the erratic and uncertain desires of the child in the womb, but whereas there is usually a belief that it is essential to gratify these cravings I found some Bison-horn Marias of opinion that to do so was dangerous. 'If she eats earth, she will die; if she craves for fish and gets it, she will die.' But at Gudra they took the conventional view and held it was more dangerous to deny the cravings than to fulfil them. Long ago, I was told, a woman wanted a plantain and could not get it; the child was born with a plantain in its hand. Another woman demanded buttermilk and when her request was denied, her hands and feet swelled.

Birth normally occurs on the fenced-in veranda of a Bison-horn Maria house, in the place where the menstruating woman has to sleep. Any variation from the normal is considered dangerous; a foot-presentation, for example, is expected to prove fatal to both child and mother. For the cord to be discovered round the shoulder is a good omen and prophesies wealth; but a strangulating cord suggests that the child will be hanged and a cord round the leg is also bad. The cord is cut with an arrow-head if the child is a boy, with a knife or sickle if it is a girl. The mother herself or some old woman of the household makes a ligature and severs the cord below it. Meanwhile the husband erects in the compound a small 'bathing-hut', a simple unroofed structure of leafy branches, inside which he digs a pit. Then the mother herself, or her attendant, puts the placenta and cord on a leaf-platter of *bauhinia vahlii* leaves[2] and places it in the pit. The father fills the pit with earth and places three green logs and sometimes a large stone or wooden

[1] I have been told that no woman should at any time eat part of an animal sacrificed to Bhimsul or Dongar Pen.

[2] This platter, which is chosen at random from a pile, is carefully examined, for the number of children the mother may expect is estimated from the number of bamboo stitches holding it together.

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

262 The children, as well as older people, kill and eat frogs when they can. In
222 the rains they creep up to any small pond and with their sticks kill the frogs
252 before they are able to escape into the water. They remove the skin and stomach and roast the rest. Many people, however, only eat the hind legs, regarding the rest as dangerous. Frog's flesh is believed to be a useful [278] remedy for swollen glands.[1] Various kinds of lizards are eaten the same way. In most of the less sophisticated villages red ants are valued both for food and as a febrifuge. A party of chelik go through the forest until they see the ants' nests high up in the branches of a tree. Then one of them climbs up and breaks off or cuts all the branches on which the nests are and throws them to the ground. The others quickly prepare leaf-cups and one of them plunges his hands into the nests and fills the cups with the ants and their eggs. They brush off the eggs and tie up the ants in the cups. They bring the little bundles home and put them straight into the fire. When they have been roasted for some minutes they remove the cups, open them and squeeze the ants into a paste. They add salt and chilli and put the mixture back into the fire to bake. This chutney, which is very tasty, with a sharp clean taste, is generally eaten with liquor. At the beginning of the rains the Muria also catch the flying white ants, pull off their wings and fry the bodies.[2]

Other delicacies are the grubs which are found in the date-palm. These large white grubs are sought after by many others beside the Muria, and are bought even by high-caste Hindus in the bazaars for as much as two pice apiece. They are fried and eaten and sometimes oil is extracted from them.

262 The Muria also enjoy catching and eating the river crab, 'the blacksmith
226 that takes his pincers and hammer about with him', 'the Raja who has hands
524 and feet but lacks a head'.[3] Shrimps and prawns are common in the streams; a prawn is described as 'the boy with eight feet, twelve shoulders and sixteen horns'.

262 Most of these delicacies, fried with a little chilli, are used as 'savouries' when the people go to drink salphi juice or other liquor. Men and boys going in the evening towards the sago-palms may be seen carrying little leaf-bundles containing fried frogs, grubs and a chutney of red ants. These relieve the sweetness of the salphi juice and the unpleasant taste of the mahua spirit.

262 Beef is still eaten in all parts of Bastar, even by the sophisticated Raja
● 843 Muria who are so loud in their protests that they have abandoned it. An interesting story connects the practice with the *dohada* cravings of pregnancy. The Muria theory, which is the old Hindu theory, is that it is the child in the womb who is responsible for the mother's irrational desires. 'A Brahmin woman six months pregnant had a craving for beef and went to a Ganda to get some. For fear of the husband he refused, but his wife gave her two

[171] [1] Crooke has an interesting note on frog-eating. 'The Musahar of Mirzapur, he says, eat two kinds, a small and a large, at marriages. "The Burmese certainly eat them and boiled frogs are said to be exposed for sale in their bazaars. I hear that the Burmese prisoners in the Benares jail have been caught eating them alive. Mr Bower tells me that he knows of Salees in Oudh fattening frogs for food in earthen jars."—*N.I. Notes and Queries*, Vol. II, p. 78.

[171] [2] In South India ants are believed to be a tonic; there is a Tamil proverb that 'If you eat a thousand ants, you will get the strength of an elephant'. A paste made with ants is recorded as being used with curry in Kanara. Winged termites are widely eaten, and sometimes their bodies are sun-dried and stored. The queen termite is considered a special delicacy, fried or raw; Tamil athletes are said to keep themselves in trim by swallowing it raw and then sprinting a couple of miles. See S. T. Moses, 'Ants and Folk-Beliefs in South India', *Man in India*, Vol. VIII, pp. 10ff.

[278] [3] The viscous substance adhering to the carapace of a crab is believed to be good for ear-ache.

THE MURIA'S LIVELIHOOD

small pieces. When the Brahmin discovered it, he killed his wife and ripped open her belly in order to remove the meat and thus save her from a worse fate after death. But he found the child with one bit of beef in its mouth and the other in its hand: it cried, "It was not my mother who wanted it, but I myself" and so died.'

This story is popular and widespread. It is said that in olden days, the Maria and Muria regarded beef as taboo. But a Maria woman, like the Brahmin, developed a craving for it and ate some. When the husband was on the point of killing her, the child leapt out of the belly with a bit in its mouth and a bit in its hand crying, 'Not mother, but I'. From that day Maria and Muria have eaten beef.

FIG. 6. Uspal used for pounding tobacco or haldi
Length 1' 9"

The Muria take their regular meals, when they are at home, three times a day. At about 10 in the morning they eat boiled rice and a few leaf-cups of jawa. Jawa is the Muria's staple food. It is made of rice, mandia grain, or any of the smaller millets, exactly as the Gond and Baiga of the Central Provinces make pej. Mandia-jawa, however, has its special methods of preparation. The mandia is ground into flour and soaked in water for two days. Rice or kodon is put to boil and when half-cooked the mandia flour is added, the pot filled up with water and rice and flour are cooked together. This preparation is called *ganji*. At about 3 in the afternoon the Muria has a few leaf-cups of stale jawa, and then at 8 in the evening he again has boiled rice, this time with pulse of various kinds.

At every meal, there is chutney of tamarind, mango or mahua; any roots or vegetables available are cooked with chilli, haldi or garlic; meat, fish or eggs may be added. These delicacies vary, of course, from day to day, but the main diet rarely changes.

The Muria's kitchen is the simplest place possible. A horseshoe hearth of earth is made in a corner on the ground; half-a-dozen different earthen pots are used; there may be a wooden spoon and certainly some gourd ladles. Without increasing the cost, the standard of the cookery could be enormously improved; it has always astonished me no one has tried to improve village cookery in India.

When there is a feast, or at a marriage, most of the cooking is done out of doors and by the chelik. Long narrow trenches are dug in the ground, filled

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

of which a folded leaf of the date palm is attached to ensure that the juice trickles down into the pot. A small gourd with a hole at either end is kept in the pot, which is finally protected with a bamboo cover to guard it from wind and birds.

When the climber has reached the pot, he removes the leaf and scrapes the end of the cut spadix with a knife that is kept among the branches. Sometimes he rubs it with a little marking-nut juice. Then he removes the sap from the pot and puts it in a gourd tied round his waist. Sometimes if the tree is very high, he lowers this gourd down to the ground with a cord. Then he replaces the leaf at the end of the spadix, puts the cover over the pot and descends.

There are various rules and customs about the use of the juice. It is not considered good to drink it when it is too sweet, as it has a laxative effect. For this reason a little of the old juice is always left in the pot to ferment it. To increase its power a little of the root of the danbaher tree is added. When the weather is cloudy it is considered that it will not be good. The juice of a newly tapped tree should not be given to a pregnant woman or she may abort. In fact, at the beginning, when a new tree is tapped only men drink. The Hill Maria do not give the juice at any time to a woman in her menstrual period.

There is a curious idea that the sago-palm itself is subject to a menstrual period.[1] Every month there is a space of two or three days during which the juice does not flow properly and it is not considered safe at this time to drink even what little there is. So, too, for the first week or so after a new tree is tapped the juice should be avoided, for it is then, they say, like semen. At Phunder, the Muria said that the end of the tree's menstrual period is indicated by the presence of a lotus leaf in the pot.

In some villages, the Muria believe that two Kanyang visit the palms. One is Jal Kanyang, and is a motiari; the other, Kaudo Kanyang, is regarded with characteristic inconsistency as a chelik. When Kaudo Kanyang comes to play in a tree, the juice is scanty but good; when Jal Kanyang comes, the juice flows like a river but it is less potent. Sometimes then a little sand and even fish are found in the pot.

This belief in the fish that get into the pot is widespread. Once in the days of Chaitu Gaita of Alor, a chelik climbed a sago-palm and found two *turu* fish and some sand at the bottom of the gourd. At Palli I was told that such fish were 'sometimes caught by the Salphi Maiden and taken up into the tree'. I have recorded the same idea among the Hill Maria.[2]

When a tree is tapped for the first time offerings are made to the Gorga Kanyang. In some villages a hollow bamboo full of water is brought from a stream and leant against the foot of the palm. It is believed that a Kanyang lives in this water and probably there is an idea that the tree will give as much juice as there is water in the bamboo. In order to improve the flow of juice the villagers sometimes promise the Gorga Kanyang a pig or a chicken.

At Adnar on the day they first tapped a new tree the village Gaita, followed by all the villagers, came to its foot. With red and black powder he made a row of three circles, inside each of which he drew a cross. Rice was piled on these crosses and two leaf-cups full of salphi juice were placed by them. One pile of rice was for the Gorga Kanyang, one for Kaudo Kanyang, and one for

[1] This idea is widespread: I have found it among Juang, Kond, Gadaba, Bondo and, in Bastar, among the Bison-horn Maria.

[2] Compare S. L. Hora, 'Rains of Fishes in India', *JRASB.*, Vol. XXIX (1933), pp. 93ff.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

CHAPTER FOUR

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

I. Pregnancy and Birth

[524] *Burha ta jāwa undāna bedur gatla te mak dāyna. It drinks gruel from a gourd, but hides among the bamboos.* A baby, drinking at the breast and swinging in a bamboo basket.—Muria riddle

842 PREGNANCY so dreaded in the ghotul is desired at home. Sterility does not seem to be very common—out of the 2000 cases studied only 150 were childless—but a married couple without children are always miserable.

The Muria attribute sterility to various causes. One is a purely physical one. 'I have no child', said the Chalki of Korenda, 'though I go to my wife every day. There may be plenty of rain, but unless there is warmth in the ground to help the seed to grow, there is no harvest.' A former Sirdar of Pupgaon attributed his sterility to the fact that 'perhaps I do not know how to copulate properly'. Wives sometimes say their childlessness is because their husbands have 'wasted all their seed by scattering it in the ghotul fields'.

842 Others give a supernatural reason. At a marriage a witch may slip some
789 evil magic into the bride's dress or hair when she puts tika on her forehead. A jealous motiari whose 'husband' has been married to another girl may perform spells to stop her supplanter from realizing the fullest joys of marriage. The Constable of Modenar said that Mayakaka Deo or Kondi Deo was the cause of the trouble. 'He stopped my wife having a child for four years. Then we promised him a pig, a goat and five chickens and a child was born.'

Sterility is always a cause of quarrels and disagreements in the home. Hus-
842 band and wife each accuse the other of being at fault. A former Sirdar of
578 Sodma said, 'We went to each other for seven years till we were weary, and
[586] still there was no child; every time my wife's period began, she abused me saying, "Are you a man? Haven't you any strength?" And I used to feel miserable and ashamed.' On the other hand, out of the 2000 marriages examined, none of the few divorces were attributed to this cause.

● 843 A girl is born in nine months, a boy in ten. 'A girl takes a great deal out of the mother.' Yet women love suffering—*godan* (tattooing), *chodan* (intercourse), and *poidan* (child-bearing). But Muria men seem to do all they can to spare the mother. During pregnancy intercourse must cease after the fifth month. Intercourse is not generally resumed for a year after child-birth, for 'if you sow seed in wet ground, a harvest is certain' and it is important to space confinements properly. After a year, 'when the wife feels an itching for it, she herself goes to lie with her husband'. But in some places, in Alor and Berma for example, I was told that intercourse began again after six months, and at Kabonga that 'a man goes to his wife when their child first smiles'. But most Muria regard a woman as physically unattractive during the puerperium. 'Her breasts and privates are *gilgila*: who would care for them? But once the child can walk, the mother is again lovely in our eyes.'

843 In Masora I was given a catalogue of the various kinds of birth and it is
844 interesting to note that these are largely based on the spacing of confinements. The Sambhar Birth occurs after a space of three years and the child is strong and healthy. The Tiger Birth also comes after three years to a woman of

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Muria

THE COURSE OF MURIA LIFE: CHILDHOOD

full figure and the child is 'fine as a young tiger'. The Hare Birth, however, occurs after only eighteen months, and the child is weak and sickly. The Frog Birth, after twelve months, is also bad for the child. In the Lizard Birth, when the child resembles a lizard, there is an interval of three years, but the mother is herself weak and her breasts secrete insufficient nourishment.

When a girl suffers from menorrhagia she has a Green Lizard Birth, and the child is weak, but the offspring of Mother Birth, when the period begins and ends punctually, is vigorous.

Once the mother is pregnant she is subject to the usual routine and taboos, though generally I think an increase of restrictions at this time is due to Hindu influence.[1] The Muria woman's movements are not greatly controlled, but she must not climb a tree and should stay indoors during an eclipse. She must be very careful not to steal anything; if she takes bread, she will bear a male child with his ear bent over; if she steals haldi, garlic, or ginger, the child will be born with six fingers. In one village my wife was recommended to tie a mango in her sari; then, when she had a child, it would never be ill, 'even its nose wouldn't run'. But it is dangerous to eat a mango, for it may cause abortion.

The husband is also subject to taboos. He must not cross the blooded path of a hunted and wounded animal. He has to eat separately at festivals. Neither he nor his wife may eat the head or legs of any animal killed for sacrifice or in a ceremonial hunt.

The scene of birth is generally on the verandah or in a cattle-shed. A child must not be delivered in the kitchen or the room where the Pot of the Departed is kept. There are no professional midwives and assistance is given by the women of the family and sometimes by the Gaita's wife. Few precautions are taken. The mother is given ordinary food and often begins to work on the third day.

The umbilical cord is cut with a knife in a few villages (in Temrugaon, for example), but more generally with an arrow-head, whether the child be a boy or girl, by the mother, sister, elder brother's wife or Gaita's wife.

The placenta is wrapped in a siari leaf and buried in a pit behind the house, and a small screen of branches is erected round it. Until the umbilical stump falls off, this pit is not filled in; it is covered with a stone or a wooden seat on which the mother sits to bathe once or twice a day for about six weeks. During this period, she must not go into the house but must stay on the verandah. The digging-stick with which the pit was dug and the arrow with which the cord was cut are driven into the ground beside the pit. A pot of water is kept near by. When the stump falls, they throw it into the pit and fill it up with rubbish and earth. When the mother stops bathing and resumes her ordinary domestic duties, they wash the digging-stick and arrow, offer liquor and apply haldi to them. The stick is put back in the house, and the arrow is stuck into the roof or given away. It is not regarded as having any special significance or value after its work is done.

If the 'signs' of a tiger or a snake appear in the soil above the buried placenta, the child is expected to be killed by a tiger or bitten by a snake. Should the water in the pot leak out of its own accord, the child will meet its death by drowning. A strangulating umbilical cord suggests that the child will die by hanging, either in jail or through suicide.

[1] Compare with the very simple Muria tradition the elaborate regulations of the more sophisticated tribesmen of the Central Provinces described in my article, 'Conception, Pregnancy and Birth among the Tribesmen of the Maikal Hills', *JASB*, Vol. IX (1943), pp. 99-142.

2: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1947 AW32 Gond AW32
Muria

THE MURIA AND THEIR GHOTUL

844 Until the stump falls the father is in a state of taboo. He must not cook, he must not leave the house to visit his friends, he cannot go to the ghotul. No one will accept his tobacco and he cannot share in a sacrificial feast.

843 Certain attempts are made to influence and to diagnose the sex of unborn children. If a motiari, after fasting for twelve hours at her first menstruation, eats a dish of *khichri*, a mixture of pulse and rice without salt, her children will likewise be a mixture of boys and girls. If she goes to the jungle on this day and brings home a bundle of leaves on her hip, she is likely to bear girls.

Sometimes Muria women try to discover the sex of the next child by examining the colour and number of the knots on the umbilical cord of the first, but that no one takes these forecasts very seriously is seen in the riddle about a pregnant woman.

[524] *Chipta upre jai phar,* There is fruit inside the basket,
Jāna bābu kai phar? How can you know what fruit it is?

845 Abnormal births are not common but are not unknown. Twins are called *jānwar jiyo* and are not regarded as either particularly lucky or unlucky. Twins with a single placenta are born if the mother eats a double fruit such as a double plantain or tendu or uses double leaves as a plate. Sensible women are careful to avoid doing this but sometimes accidents happen. In Renga-gondi, there are twins, named Joga and Jogi, who were born because the mother ate off a double leaf at the end of her period. Such twins may also be due to a woman's passing between two men on her way back to the house from her menstrual bath. The shadows of both men fall upon her and the twins resemble them. In some places, it is thought if she passes at this time a man holding a baby she will have twins—if it is a boy, she will have male twins; if a girl, male and female. If the woman lies on her back after intercourse so that the man's seed divides into two streams, twins may result. When there are two placentae it is often supposed that the woman has been to two men and the twins, therefore, have different fathers. The woman may also have had intercourse with a ghost or spirit on the day following intercourse with her husband. Where this is suspected, the twins (if boy and girl) are called Dukhalu [777] and Dukhali and are vaguely regarded as unlucky.

Pandru of Berimakot twice had twins, from different wives. The first were from the Manjaro whom he made pregnant in the ghotul and were both girls: the second were from the Nirosa, another of his ghotul lovers, and were both boys. Pandru thinks he had twins because he went to each of the girls twice on the night following the post-catamenial bath. If this is done during the rains, girls will be born: if during the hot weather, there will be boys.

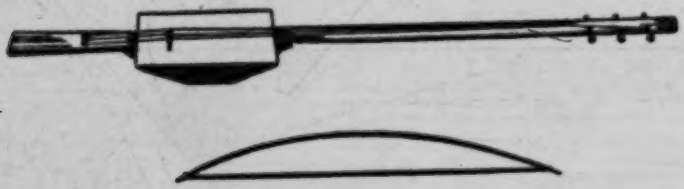
A foot-presentation is called in Gondi *idli-janawla* or 'cow-birth', for the [777] child is born like a calf. This is regarded as very unlucky indeed and the family must immediately protect the child by waving round it a bundle of burning grass. Such births are generally expected to be fatal to the mother. A *kera bānjh* is a woman with only one child; 'she is like a plantain which gives fruit once on a stalk and never again'.

II. Name-giving

559 After about six weeks the mother stops her ritual bathing and resumes her domestic duties inside the house. It is now time to give the child a name, a name—it must be remembered—which the little chelik or motiari will hardly use during the period of childhood, which will never be taken by husband or wife after marriage, and will be uttered only with reluctance after death. Even then a later nickname may supplant this *mar-podor* or original name.

3: Elwin E-5 (1935-1942) 1943
AW32 Gond AW32 .
Bison Horn Maria

534 bamboo and the usual flute. They are fond of gongs, but these are not now so common as they were. At the great Pen Karsita at Ghotpal in 1942, the dancers used slabs of



Kikir Fiddle
(*Length 2'*)

coloured wood, bits of old tin and indeed anything that would make a noise instead of the traditional gongs. Like the Muria, at festivals and even for amusement the Maria use a hunting horn, either a real horn or one made of brass.

541 Besides dancing, the chief Maria relaxation is the cock-fight. At the conclusion of all the bigger bazaars, the men retire to a grove of trees and set their cocks against each other. The cocks are armed with sharp and deadly little knives tied to their feet and fights are to the death. The victor has the privilege of taking the defeated bird, but the real excitement comes from the betting.

V

844 The ceremonies attending birth and marriage are very [843] simple. The pregnant mother is not hampered by many restrictions on her movements. After the birth of the child the placenta is buried in a pit behind the house. Logs are placed above it and the arrow with which the cord was cut is driven into the ground near by. A small shed is made and the 846 mother lives here for some weeks with her child, taking a daily bath above the placenta-pit. At the end of this period of segregation, the husband gives a feast to the neighbours, [551] the child is named and the mother is permitted to return to her household duties. It was to such a feast that the unhappy victim of the Mardum sacrifice was enticed.[1]

881 There are no ceremonies of initiation at puberty, though a

[1] Case No 31.